

best respects of F. Webster
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ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN INSTITUTE

OF THE CITY OF NEW-YORK,

AT THE

BROADWAY TABERNACLE, OCTOBER 14, 1847,

DURING THE

Twentieth Annual Fair.

By FLETCHER WEBSTER, Esq.

New-York:

VAN NORDEN & AMERMAN, PRINTERS,
No. 60 WILLIAM-STREET.

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A D D R E S S .

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN :

It is not without diffidence that I appear before you. I stand in the presence of practical men, to address them on practical subjects. I see before me gentlemen, who are either manufacturers, or mechanics, or merchants, or agriculturists, or men of science, each one of whom has vastly more knowledge, general and detailed, than I can possibly have, on all the branches of his particular pursuit or profession ; and it is on these pursuits and professions ; and their relations, that I am expected to speak.

Nor are those whom I have the honour to address on such subjects, mere followers, contentedly plodding on in a beaten route, to whom there may be an opportunity of communicating some startling intelligence ; but, on the contrary, whatever intense thought, acute perception, inventive genius, and enlightened observation can compass, is daily applied by them to the improvement, and extension, and elevation of their various professions, and with how much success, let not only what we have here seen, but let our daily experience declare.

Each wonderful machine which the mechanic constructs or the manufacturer uses, is an improvement, either in nicety of execution, celerity of motion, economy of expense, or increase of power over former constructions. Each new ship which ploughs the vexed ocean, is, in model, or arrangement, or apparel, superior to its predecessors, deemed almost perfect.

Each field and garden, by enlightened cultivation, is made to yield, year after year, more generous harvests.

It is to those who are chiefly instrumental in producing these improvements, to those who have given the impulse, and still continue to urge on and lead forward ; it is to the fellow citizens of the lamented Buel, to the associates and pupils of Tallmadge, that it is my duty to speak.

Anniversaries are usually held to commemorate some former event, some occurrence gone by, on which history has set its seal, and which we must contemplate as it is, unchanging and unchangeable ; a great fact, towering up in the distant past, which no man can alter, or conceal, or question.

We commemorate the great deed by which we became freemen ; we commemorate the no less important event of the land-

ing of the persecuted Pilgrims on the unknown and silent forest shores of this great continent. Such things as these are usually the subjects of annual or other celebration. But this occasion is not of that nature. We do not meet to gaze in admiration and gratitude on the great actions of others; to recall to our minds the fixed events of the historic past. This is an anniversary of PROGRESS—an anniversary of motion, not of rest.

You are moving—you are pursuing a glorious but difficult and ascending path; pushing farther and higher towards brilliant results; each hour securing some, and confident that others still grander, but now quite beyond the reach of sight, are yet to be attained. At stated intervals you halt and turn to view the advance you have made, the difficulties you have overcome, the points you have reached and passed; and then, with renewed courage and hopeful zeal, you resume your never-ending course. You have no pilot, no guide to cry out to you, "Italiam!" "Italiam!" Your journey's end, your "Italy" recedes as you advance.

Long, long may you continue upon your bright way, bearing high the appropriate banner of "Excelsior," scattering good things all around as you proceed, and leading on continually to better and greater!

This Society was founded for the purpose of "encouraging and promoting domestic industry in this State and the United States, in Agriculture, Commerce, Manufactures and the Arts." These being the great objects and interests of the Society, it is upon some, or one of these, of course, that I shall be expected to address you. Gentlemen of most eminent ability, whom, with unequal step, I follow, have preceded me, and have thrown the light of knowledge and the grace of eloquence upon each of these themes, and were they not in their nature inexhaustible, it would be useless and fatiguing to attempt to add a word. But these are subjects never trite—themes never dull. The earth and nature present daily new springing objects of admiration; art and science offer hourly new inventions to our wondering eyes.

In the order in which the various great pursuits of the Society are stated in the announcement of its purposes, agriculture stands first, and doubtless, all will agree, deservedly so. I shall, therefore, with your permission, avail myself of this precedence, and seize upon the largest and widest field of thought, where there is room and range enough for all, and where the small may safely wander with the great.

Especially, perhaps, may it be appropriate to turn our minds particularly to this subject at this time, since we have so recently heard and seen evidences of the effect of a want of that which agriculture supplies.

We have seen a great part of the civilized world convulsed, society shaken, commerce and exchanges deranged, credit de-

stroyed, great commercial houses, whose dealings were with nations and sovereigns, whose engagements affected the rise and fall of dynasties, and whose business extended over three quarters of the globe, plunged suddenly into ruin ; we have heard the cries of thousands and thousands perishing of famine, and we see multitudes of those who have fled from destruction, filling our streets, and almost content, even in their misery, to have so well escaped from overhanging death ; and our people and government have been called on to forget all distinctions of nationality and political organization, and to remember only a common humanity and a common origin, and give charities, such in amount and such in the manner of their bestowal, as the world never saw before ; and all this, because a little plant, which some two hundred years since our continent lent to the old world, had ceased there for awhile to flourish.

Fortunate indeed we are in our land and our position ! Doubly fortunate that no calamity, such as pressed on Europe, weighed upon us, and that we were able to relieve and sustain those whom it threatened to destroy ; and still more fortunate that we did not leave the opportunity of such great well-doing unimproved !

When other things shall be forgotten, when this government and people shall have passed away, when our language shall live only on monuments, the charity of America to Ireland will be remembered. If nations, like individuals, are held responsible for their deeds before the Great Tribunal, may it be remembered of us, that while with one hand armed we shed the blood of wretched Mexico, an unworthy foe, with the other we fed famishing Ireland.

Imagine a fine city crowning the green shores of a beautiful bay. The day is clear and fine ; its towers and spires glitter in the light ; the waters that roll beneath its walls, rippled by a pleasant western wind, dance sparkling in the sun. All nature is smiling and gay ; the golden sky, the glittering city, the green shores, the bright waters, combine in one glorious landscape of unequalled beauty. Seen from afar, how surpassing fair it is ! Happy the inhabitants of such a region !

But approach and see ! While all inanimate is thus brilliant and beautiful, and land, and sea, and sky in smiling concert seem to promise all that earth can give of pleasure and content, the shining city and the verdant shore are filled and covered with thousands of human beings dying of hunger. What a fearful contrast to the quiet loveliness of nature does this misery of the living present ! Under the influence of this dreadful distress all ties of relationship and friendship are forgotten. Families separate to roam singly in useless search for food, or lie down to die together in groups. Men gaze wildly on each other when

they meet, and filled with horrible thoughts turn to look back as they pass. Fathers, perishing themselves, hear, with a feeling of relief, the faint complaints of those nearest and dearest grow fainter and fainter till they are hushed for ever. Mothers see without regret the heaving bosom that expires the last sigh of their little treasures.

Disease, the inevitable attendant of famine, is also doing its fearful work. The air is heavy with foul and poisonous vapours.

There they lie in scores and heaps, the living mixed with the dead. All hope has long since gone. Some complain, some struggle, but most are given up to dull and sullen despair.

One group has straggled in an idle wandering to the shore, and looks in listless gaze upon the swelling ocean; without object, without expectation. As they look, a little speck appears in the far horizon over the sea. It comes gradually nearer, and rises clearer to the view. It is a sail, perhaps of some fishing-boat, or some small merchant vessel on its busy way in pursuit of gain.

Nearer and nearer it comes, urged rapidly onward by the favouring breeze. It stands for the land. Stately and steady it sweeps into the bay, its swelling canvass dazzling bright in the sunlight. The great proportions and the pierced sides proclaim a ship of war. Her sails are furled, and gracefully she rides to her anchor. What brings her there?

The colours that wave from her peak have more than once floated triumphant over the "battle and the wreck" in deadly opposition to the "meteor flag of England." Surely it can now have no dangerous purpose; the calamities of war are not to be added to those of famine. Or can this be a visit of idle ceremony, or untimely curiosity?

But what tumult agitates the city? What sight draws that hurrying multitude of wasted forms to the waterside? What shout rings in the ears of the dying?

That gallant ship has come on no idle or hostile errand. No crowds of armed men press her decks. Her magazines of war and implements of death are all left behind. She comes laden down till she labours, with a freight of life and help.

From her sides that once were black with cannon, threatening destruction, there now pours, in an unceasing flow, a golden stream of life-giving grain. It is this which has covered the shores, the beaches and headlands with anxious, earnest crowds, who hardly believe the strange sight to be real, as they gaze upon this food, to them unknown, and almost miraculously brought.

On hearing of this, the dying revive again and struggle into life; nature borrows strength from hope; the news rings through

the city ; the shouts awake from the dream of death those who had lain down to try the last slumber ; they drag themselves forward ; the pale mother snatches up her children, arouses her despairing neighbours, and rushes to gaze upon the food she trusts so soon to bestow on her little ones, and to taste herself. Agony and despair are put to flight—a new hope kindles in each breast—the extravagance of joy succeeds the gloomy silence of utter misery. Help is at hand. Another hour and the worst is over. They shall eat and live, and shall not die.

It may be, though heaven avert it, that we shall have wars, by land and by sea. Naval battles and triumphs may again be ours, our ships of war may again ride victors over the ocean ; but none of them, though their torn sails and battered hulls bear witness to a hundred successful contests, shall attain the renown with which mercy and charity have crowned the JAMESTOWN and the MACEDONIAN.

But quite apart from any accidental interest which recent events have given to agriculture, it is always a subject of the highest importance, the farthest extending relations. Its nature is grand. It is connected with the sublimest of sciences ; it necessarily leads to the sublimest thoughts—"from Nature up to Nature's God."

The grass and the fruits, the harvest and the flowers, though man is indeed instrumental in their production, yet depend on causes so far beyond his control, are due to influences infinite and divine, that they seem always to be the direct gifts of heaven. The ever-returning seasons, each bringing its peculiar blessings and delights, and above all the joyous spring, when again the earth turns towards the sun, are each and all new miracles. Who can say when in the autumn our planet turns away from the great centre of light and life, and with speed inconceivable travels off through space, infinitely cold and dark, that we shall ever stop in our course, and not rush unchecked on our cheerless way to "cold obstruction" and eternal night ? Who can predict that the hand of Heaven may not omit or forbear to direct us again towards warmth and being ? And when, at the proper time we find ourselves not forgotten among the infinity of worlds, and the dissolving ice and snow, and slow appearing green assure us of his continued protection, what a cause of renewed gratitude and admiration it should be and is.

That more often recurring instance of divine bounty, the morning, which none so often see in all its beauty and glory as the agriculturist, is equally glorious and equally calculated to fill the mind and heart with the sublimest contemplations and most religious and exalted thoughts. With what pleasure do we hail the morning in health ! With what longing do we look for it in sickness !

'To the young and the gay, the happy and the healthful, morning cannot come too soon to light them to their enjoyments ; to the poor and the careworn, to the sick and the sorrowing, to the sailor tempest-driven, and the landsman troubled, hope comes with the morning.

One who appreciates Nature in all her glorious works, has said of the morning,—

"It is morning, and a morning sweet, fresh and delightful. Everybody knows the *morning*, in its metaphysical sense, as applied to many objects and on so many occasions. The health, strength and beauty of early years lead us to call that period the 'morning of life.' Of a lovely young woman we say, she is 'bright as the morning;' and no one doubts why Lucifer was called 'son of the morning.' But the morning itself, few people, inhabitants of cities, know any thing about. Among all our good people not one in a thousand sees the sun rise once a year. They know nothing of the 'morning.' Their idea of it is, that it is that part of the day which comes along after a cup of coffee and a beefsteak, or a piece of toast. With them 'morning' is not a new issuing of light, a new bursting forth of the sun, a new waking up of all that has life from a sort of temporary death, to behold again the works of God, the heavens and the earth, it is only part of the domestic day, belonging to breakfast, to reading the newspapers, answering notes, sending the children to school, and giving orders for dinner.

"The first faint streak of light, the earliest *purpling* of the east, which the lark springs up to meet, and the deeper and deeper colouring into orange and red, until, at length, 'the glorious sun is seen, regent of day,' this they never enjoy, for they never see.

"Beautiful descriptions of the 'morning' abound in all languages, but they are the strongest perhaps in those of the East, where the sun is so often an object of worship. King David speaks of taking to himself 'the wings of the morning.' This is highly poetical and beautiful. The 'wings of the morning' are the beams of the rising sun. Rays of light are wings. It is thus said that the Sun of Righteousness shall arise 'with healing in his wings;' a rising sun which shall scatter light, and *health*, and joy throughout the universe. Milton has fine descriptions of the morning, but not so many as Shakspeare.

"I never thought that Adam had much advantage of us from having seen the world while it was new. The manifestations of the power of God, like his mercies, are 'new every *morning*,' and fresh every moment. We see as fine risings of the sun as ever Adam saw, and its risings are as much a miracle now as they were in his day, and I think a good deal more, because it is now a part of the miracle that for thousands and thousands of

years he has come to his appointed time, without the variation of a millionth part of a second. Adam could not tell how this might be.

“I know the morning. I am acquainted with it, and I love it. I love it fresh and sweet as it is, a daily new creation breaking forth and calling all that have life and breath and being to new adoration, new enjoyments, and new gratitude.”

The contemplation of the works of man, of his inventions, that seem almost creations, inventions that annihilate space, enable him to outstrip the light in speed, to defy the winds and waves, and conquer the elements, that give him strength at will, that make the forked lightning his minister; all these give us occasion for well-founded pride and exultation. We rejoice in men, in ourselves and our capacities; but when we regard the fields and the harvests, the seed and the grain, the clouds and the rain, we remember their Almighty author, compared with whose works how little, how feeble, and how silly are our best contrivances and most astonishing inventions, and we rejoice and exult in the display of the wonders of infinite skill and immeasurable power.

In endeavouring to speak of agriculture, I must be general in my remarks, confining myself chiefly to its political and social relations. Of practical agriculture he can know little who does not himself cultivate the ground; if not with his own hand, yet under his constant supervision. I am not like the patriarchs of old, or Dandie Dinmont, “cunning in that which belongeth to flocks and herds,” and this assembly is a place for most of us to attend with the view of learning, not of teaching.

One of the first indications of civilization is the advancement and improvement of agriculture; and all histories show that the more refined a people become, the more skilful is their cultivation.

In all the great empires of the old world, in the East, in China and India, Babylon and Rome, the science of agriculture was carried to the highest pitch in the days of their glory that their knowledge of the arts and sciences allowed. The gardens of Lucullus and Lysander, and the hanging gardens of Babylon, bear witness to this. With us in our day it has become a science, a study, a pursuit of the best educated, the most distinguished, the most patriotic in all civilized countries. It is no longer a mere custom of scratching ignorantly the surface of the earth and depositing a few grains; it is no more a rude and unenlightened occupation for boors and peasants. It makes all other sciences tributary, and all the discoveries of chemistry, and geology, and mechanics are pressed into its service. It is coming very properly to be considered as *the* science first to be perfected.

— In all old and thickly settled countries, where the demand presses hard on the supply, the invention and energies of

statesmen are employed to keep before the want of food. The day is probably far distant when we shall ever be so densely populated as to feel this sort of pressure, but it will eventually come, and then not even the exuberant and inexhaustible prairies of Illinois, and the fathomless alluvion of the valley of the Mississippi can more than supply our wants. We may learn from China how this may be. China, larger than we, with all our territory, though we include all that which our government seems to demand of Mexico, and with a soil in all respects as rich as ours—her great rivers, Hoang-ho and Kiang-ku, watering valleys as long and fertile as that of the Mississippi, and the great plains of her Northwestern regions, bearing grain like our great North West, and her southern provinces raising rice on every inch of tillable soil—China finds it difficult, from all this territory, and by all the untiring and skilful agricultural industry of her people, to feed her millions.

So important do these sagacious people think it to promote agriculture, that the greatest national celebration they have is an agricultural one, on which the Brother of the Sun and Moon, as they term their monarch, reverently scratches a furrow on the face of his mother Earth, holding the plough with his own hand, and attended by all his chief dignitaries.

There is not an inch, I might say, of arable land in all China not cultivated; is there a patch anywhere, among barren rocks, a little dell among sandy hills, a strip that can be reclaimed from some morass, it is seized on by the economical Chinese, and made to bear food for man. Some writer gives an almost incredible account—incredible to those who have not seen Chinese industry, and patience, and economy—of their care in cultivation.

He says “there is hardly a spot of earth which their skill and industry does not force to produce something. Where rice will not grow, they raise the sweet potato, or else it is sugar cane, or strawberries, or cotton-wood trees, or tallow trees, or laurels—at least, even on the sandiest spots, they rear a stunted pine, which yields a little wood and a little turpentine. The pains which the agriculturist takes to preserve his crop exceeds belief. If he fears the wind may shake the grain from his ripening rice, he collects several stalks in a bunch, ties them together, and thus makes them render each other a mutual support. He does the same to protect, in exposed places, his sugar cane, and intertwines the leaves of those stalks which form the outside or circumference of the bunch.”

He well knows, too, the value of manure, and nothing that will decay, or can be made to enrich the soil, is lost. Even the barbers carefully save all the beard and hair which they crop from faces and heads, and dispose of it, as manure, to the Chinese

farmer. What a mine of wealth he would discover in the bearded Apollos of our cities !

But with all this care and all this extent of territory, the demand for food exceeds the supply. The only article which China, unsocial and independent in all other respects, is forced to import, is rice, and of this the government annually stores great supplies, which it distributes in seasons of scarcity.

We may perhaps, also, take a lesson from China in other things than agriculture. China has been able, for years that no man can number, to live almost wholly independent of the rest of the world. She has been able to do this, because from her great extent of territory, under one strong central government, such, by the way, as is necessary to hold together a very extended realm, she could supply nearly all her own necessities of physical sustenance, and because she early learned the doctrine of protection to home industry, whether agricultural, mechanical or manufacturing.

It will be long, as I said, before we shall reach the over-peopled condition of China, but in all probability we shall in time, and may we be wise in time, and give to agriculture all that attention and all that protection and encouragement which may be necessary to advance it to its highest perfection.

A distinguished citizen of Massachusetts has recently presented to Harvard College a donation of unequalled munificence, for the purpose of establishing a school of practical science. I trust it may not be long before there shall be established, somewhere in our country, a school of practical agricultural instruction,—a school which shall afford the farmer that advantage which almost all others enjoy, and that is the opportunity of learning by the experience of others, of being taught in a thorough and enlightened manner the great principles and scientific truths, as well as practised in the details of his occupation. May I venture to add what the place and the occasion suggest, that when such an institute shall be created, it will be looked for not far from this, the great capital of the new world.

It need not be said that no nation can be independent which relies on foreign supplies for food. Let us for a moment contemplate the greatest empire, I believe I may say, that the world has ever seen, the British. Its power has been described by those capable of describing great things, and we all know it, how great it is ; those worlds that Alexander sighed for, have owned its sway ; language can hardly exaggerate its greatness—continents are its provinces—and yet with all this might and dominion, with all its fleets and armies, all its Indies, East and West, its islands and its fortresses, commanding so many seas, how near its heart is a disease which always threatens its existence. Suppose the late famine in Ireland and Scotland had oc-

curred during a time of war. What is valour, what warlike skill and power, what all collections of destructives against a foe like famine? Not all the cannon of England could force supplies of food from other lands, nor all her bayonets prevent that result, which has so often proved the ruin of great states—domestic commotion.

It is a conviction of this necessity of a home supply of food, under all circumstances, which occasions such attention to be given to the subject of agriculture, both in England and on the continent of Europe. Modified by political and social circumstances, all Europe is striving by agricultural improvement to reach a common result.

The two leading countries, England and France, are trying two great experiments in the production of food; both having in view the same object, but seeking it by means wholly diverse.

In England the great body of the land is held in a few hands and in large quantities; in France it is divided up into almost infinitesimal divisions. It may be doubted whether either is quite right, and whether they have not run into too great extremes on each side.

Land held in masses by great landlords has a tendency to debase and degrade the tillers of the soil, who are not owners; divided too much, it tends to make all poor alike; to prevent altogether the rearing of cattle and horses, and to cause a great waste of land, cut up by roads and paths.

In some countries, where this subdivision of land has been practised a great deal longer than in France, a most extraordinary custom has arisen, which is intended to prevent the too absurd division of lands, which otherwise would be cut up into farms of a foot square. I allude to the custom of what is called Polyandris, practised in the Island of Ceylon, and in some provinces of India, which is the opposite of polygamy; for, instead of one husband having several wives, one wife has several husbands.

Three brothers, for instance, who inherit from their father a farm, already reduced to Lilliputian dimensions, in the place of each one taking a wife to himself, and again subdividing the little patrimony among his own offspring, all marry the same woman, and bequeath the estate undivided to their common family.

I believe that we, more nearly than either England or France, approach the true condition, in which, as a general rule, there are neither great landlords nor very small farms. I do not now speak of cultivation in the southern parts of our country,—for there, I believe, experience has shown, that as far as profitable cultivation is concerned, large estates are far the most successful,—but of our farming in the northern and middle states. I refer to what is usually called farming, and not to

what is elsewhere usually called planting—to farmers, not planters.

It has been supposed, that in general, cultivation would be more perfect while land was held in large parcels, and by wealthy individuals, since more would be, and could be expended in improvements and experiments; and certainly the cultivation of England goes to show that such may be the case; but certain things are necessary to bring about a very high degree of success in such a system, the objections to which, as it seems to me, far more than counterbalance any advantages to be derived from it.

In the first place, as I before remarked, when the tillers of the soil are mere hard-worked day labourers, with no interest in the land, and no hope of any, a very great and most valuable portion of the community becomes degraded, and, as we should think, disfranchised, deprived of that equality, that manhood, which all of us can boast; and such must be the condition of the many, if the few are to hold the lands; then, to insure success in this system, labour must be very cheap, ill paid, and abundant, seeking rather than sought for, and there must be a great demand for food, and a scant supply, or such expensive improvements could not profitably be made.

Nor, as I believe, are particular expensive improvements of certain great estates of much general value or public benefit; in so far as they make “two blades of grass grow where one grew before,” it is well; but then, as examples, they cannot well be followed, since various estates differ in situation and locality and capacity, and what may be done on one may not on another. It is the discovery of something generally useful, something capable of application to the great mass of lands, that is really desirable and valuable, and these discoveries are quite as often made on small estates by men of moderate wealth as by the great. Of what consequence is it to the public, that some morass on some great estate has been filled up, or water brought to some barren hill, compared with the discovery, that seaweed, or marl, or electricity are good manures for all lands.

With us lands are divided into farms, neither very large nor very small. We have no very great estates in single hands; but each one cultivates his own land, which is a portion large enough for all his wants, and usually well divided into different uses. The few great tracts which belong, at present, to a few great proprietors in this state, are hardly exceptions to the general rule.

These were manorial grants before the Revolution, and some of them still continue in the possession of the descendants of the original owners; but how long does it require, since our former colonial laws of primogeniture and entail are all abolished, to

reduce these possessions to the same platform with all the others? The ordinary course of nature, and the quiet operation of our laws, will, without any further interference, soon divide these great holdings into as small tracts as it is desirable to parcel out agricultural estates.

With this general, rational and natural division of lands, which our laws neither unfairly hold together, like those of England, nor inconveniently subdivide like those of France, we certainly exhibit a country generally well and skilfully cultivated, though not strained to its utmost capacity; and we have no want of enlightened and liberal men, who make agriculture a study, and devote their time and their means in experiments and investigations, to its advancement and improvement. Indeed, we may safely say, that if the generality were as ready to adopt successful inventions and use fortunate discoveries as the more spirited and enlightened among us are to make them, there would be seen a great improvement still in our fields and farms.

— But prejudices have to be met and overcome; the experimentalist, a name almost as ill received, and as unjustly so, too, as that of the speculator, is sneered at by many, and coldly and distrustingly received by most; he is looked upon as reformers usually are. He startles us, disturbs our self-content and complacency, and seems to urge us to an inconvenient acceleration of progress. If, after much labour and expense, he succeeds in any of his attempts at the discovery or invention of improvements, they are adopted with much reluctance, and his example followed with great delay. Of this almost every one's experience will furnish some instance, and my own very limited knowledge affords one, perhaps not out of place.

✓ In a part of this country, near the sea, where the land is sandy, and dry, and poor, there is, among many other similar, a farm on which the owner raises a little stunted crop, growing out of pebbly hills, dotted here and there with small black spots of manure, that itself needs manuring. A neighbour of his, a little more inventive, and not quite contented with the parsimonious gifts of the needy soil, by applying seaweed and fish, which the generous ocean furnishes in great abundance, manages with little expense to make his crops flourish green and strong. The individual first referred to, was asked one day why he did not imitate his neighbour, and avail himself of the supplies to which his position gave him ready access, and apply fish or kelp to his sand hills. His answer was, that he thought, on the whole, that kelp was a hot, forcing thing, that did not last, and that fish poisoned the land. And I suppose that about this time of the year he is gathering his crop of fifteen or twenty bushels of corn to the acre, while some of his neighbours have “forced” and “poisoned”

their lands with seaweed and fish, into bearing seventy or eighty.

We have experimentalists enough, as many as England or France, who are ready to expend their means liberally for others' benefit as well as their own. The great want is, to induce their neighbours to follow their example, and adopt their improvements.

The mind of the farmer is eminently conservative and slow to change. He hesitates to make any alteration in the mode of culture which he has practised for years, and which he learned of his father; and there is certainly good reason in his case for great caution in making experiments. Others may experiment and invent machines and contrivances in iron, and wood, and brass, and if they fail in rendering them useful, their various parts may serve other purposes, the material is still capable of immediate change and new application, and without loss of time; but the farmer, if he finds in the fall that his experiment of the spring has been unsuccessful, must wait through a long year to repair his loss.

And, indeed, as farmers learn caution and wariness in this respect, so they practise it in most others. Those who have had any occasion to observe such things will agree that political opinions, among others, are much more tenaciously adhered to and unwillingly relinquished in the country than in the city. Those who live in great communities and masses, whose avocations lead them to continual association with others, are more impulsive, ambitious and alert. The farmer, on the other hand, is rather contemplative, distrustful, and attached to old things. With him *via trita* is eminently *via tuta*. It is just, and natural, and desirable that this should be so, in some degree. The sudden rush of excited multitudes doubtless needs some check, and this is found, with us, in the steady, deliberate and cautious body of the agriculturists.

But if it may not be assumed, and cannot be shown by reasoning and argument, that our condition and institutions, which provide neither for very large nor very small, but for moderate estates, are best adapted to the improvement and elevation of agriculture, to the great object of raising good farmers and good men, as well as good crops, it cannot be denied, that owing to some causes, our country is extremely fortunate in these respects; and if such laws and institutions are not the chief promoters of these results, as most of us believe, at least they appear to offer no hindrance to their attainment.

The agriculturists of America have a great future before them. It is pretty certain, that for a great number of years, nothing but providential events, such as most unheard of dearth and famine, can prevent their having yearly a large surplus of produce to dispose of; and it is probable that Great Britain, if

not France, must be their consumers to a great extent. It is very clear, that some of the most valuable American agricultural products which have lately, under the so called "free trade" system of England, found their way into that country, are not likely to be again kept out by a rebuilding of the former barricades against them.

It occurs to me, as I pronounce the words "free trade," what a difference the same phrase has in different places and times.

We hear of free trade in our country as well as in England, at the present time.

In these times and in England, it means free trade in corn and protection to manufactures;—for it is a fact too well known to be disputed, that this English *free trade* is a measure forced from the great landowners by the manufacturers, with Mr. Cobden at their head. It is not, to be sure, to protect English manufactures against foreign competition, for that they do not fear any more than our agriculturists fear it in their breadstuffs and provisions, but to protect them against the rapacity of the landed interest of England.

It is protection to English manufactures, such as English manufactures happen to need, and if they had required any other sort of protection in reason, it would have been obtained, such as British interests of every sort, agricultural, commercial, manufacturing and national, are always sure to receive from a government alive to British interests, and knowing how to preserve them and advance them, and generally not particularly modest in taking care of their own.

In the present condition of the two countries in regard to the relations between capital and labour, free trade in England is exactly the same thing in its results, as protection in the United States.

In both cases the thing protected is *labour*; with us domestic labour is protected against foreign labour, which is cheaper than ours; in England it is protected, not against foreign labour, against which it needs no protection, but against *capital* vested in land. In both cases the object is identical, to wit, the securing to labour of remunerating wages, because, whether wages be remunerating, depends, not wholly on the nominal amount, but essentially on the price of food. A less rate of wages may be sufficiently remunerating if food is made cheaper.

If Mr. Cobden were now in our councils he would, according to his own recent declarations, be a supporter of the tariff of 1842. In this he shows the distinction which a clear mind is capable of making, and that he can discern differences in things, though they bear the same name, and resemblances in things, though they are classed under different heads.

A tariff man of the United States is to his country what a

free trade man in Great Britain is to his, **A FRIEND TO THE LABOUR OF HIS FELLOW CITIZENS.**

With us free trade means an abandonment of all provision by the supreme power for the welfare of the several great interests of the country, leaving each to struggle as it may, single handed and unsupported, against every competitor from all other countries, and as much indebted for protection and fostering care to our own government as was Robinson Crusoe to his, when planting grain and catching goats on his desert island.

The farmers of the United States, more than any other class, hold in their hands the great interests of the country; they *out-number* all the rest, and to them, their intelligence, their honesty, their liberality and their patriotism we must look in all emergencies, for the support of the government and the protection of the great interests of all. On the farmers, who compose the great mass of the people, we rely for the maintenance of good government, free principles and correct political opinions, for the preservation of morality and the laws, and to them we look, in the last resort, for the defence of the land to which they are attached.

It may be well expected, that, as a soil always kindly, if not everywhere extremely rich, a climate most propitious, and institutions of government of his own making and own choice, bless the agriculturist, and insure him from all danger, protect him, so that he need fear nothing for himself, he will be ready, while thus fortunate and secure, to aid in protecting those classes of his fellow citizens who need protection, against those dangers, whatever they may be, that threaten their interests and prosperity, whether those dangers come from without or within.

Agriculture, as I have before said, and as we all know, is the basis of every thing. We begin by getting something to eat; when that is accomplished we are ready to look about and see what remains to be done.

All manufactures and commerce rest on agriculture; rice, cotton, coffee, tea, sugar, breadstuffs and provisions, load far the greater part of the uncounted keels that track the waters of the globe; all arts and trades depend upon successful agriculture.

But still, while all this is true of it, agriculture is as much indebted to the arts and to commerce, to manufactures and to science, for the distribution and consumption of its products, for its development, and encouragement, and elevation, as the pedestal of a statue is indebted for its value and its honour to the beautiful proportions which rest upon it.

While other arts would not be at all without agriculture, without other arts agriculture would be dull, barbarous and unfinished—a great base supporting nothing.

It will, I suppose, be admitted on all hands, that merely agricultural countries are necessarily always poor and in a great degree dependent.

Of the thousand examples that rise before us of this truth, we might take the provinces of the Ukraine of Russia, so rich wheat-bearing regions, and contrast them with rugged Scotland ; or, nearer home, let us see what comparison unfortunate or wretched Mexico bears with ourselves.

She is agricultural merely—her mines occupy but a very small part of her population, and the rest are farmers or herdsmen. With a climate and soil much readier to yield than ours, and with eight millions of population, allowing all we can to bad government, what is the reason that Mexico is so very poor, with all her gold, except that she *makes nothing for herself*, and buys every thing. Great bridle bits and spurs, lassos and ponchos, are pretty much the sum of Mexican manufactures ; and of commerce ! how many Mexican merchant vessels traverse the seas ?

Does Mexico even make muskets and ammunition to defend herself ? Has all Mexico a foundry that will cast an iron ball ?

Our gallant soldiers die of wounds that gangrene from copper shot.

And Mexico is so poor, and her government is so poor, that there is no doubt, the destruction of human life out of the question, that this present war is one of the best things, the most profitable things that ever occurred to her. In the first place, since, according to the rules of modern chivalrous warfare, we pay for all supplies furnished our armies, we bring to the farmer's door wherever they go, a home market for all he has to spare, for which he is paid in specie, and doubtless at a very remunerating price. And, secondly, as we blockade all their ports, so that no foreign importations can be made, we keep in the country all the money that would otherwise be sent out to pay for these imported foreign manufactures ; and, if we keep up the war some time longer, we shall probably hear of manufactures springing up in Mexico, from the necessity of the case.

Why has not Mexico canals, and rail-roads, and ships, and docks, crowded and flourishing cities, and a smiling country, and well paid, well fed, well clad inhabitants ?

The answer suggests itself to every one's mind. She has no arts, no commerce, no manufactures ; nothing to buy, and use, and consume, and cause a demand and furnish a customer for her agricultural productions ; this is why she is poor and weak, more so than when Cortes marched to her chief city ; and her lands are owned in great estates by great landlords, with farms that are measured by leagues, and cultivated by those who are hardly better than slaves, because one of the results of a condition merely agricultural, where profits are very small, if they

are at all, and land is but cheap, is the acquisition by the wealthy, few of all the soil.

How different, Heaven be thanked! is our own condition. Our whole land covered with smiling villages and pleasant farms, and filled with a busy, happy, intelligent and prosperous people.

Would that it might properly be, that in the place of an irruption of armed men, we could invade Mexico with commerce and manufactures—with arts instead of arms! Raise her condition, elevate her people, and make her worth a conquest, if conquered she must be.

The great difference between her and us is caused, not merely by our differing races and differing institutions of government, but mainly by the fact that we have had wisdom and foresight enough to protect, in some degree, the home industry of the country, and purchase from our own people those things which Mexico has to look for from abroad.

While the earnings of the Mexican, who ventures to buy a manufactured article, go to fill the pockets, or improve the land, or decorate the country seat of some foreign resident, without any return to him, the expenditure of their surplus by our farmers, goes to the benefit of some fellow countrymen, who in his turn becomes a customer and purchaser of theirs. In this way we help one another—we elevate and enrich our country—we become sufficient for ourselves—we grow independent and commanding,

“Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,
As broad and general as the casing air.”

The value of things depends on the labour bestowed on them. The diamond itself, buried in the mine, is valueless; it is in a great degree the labour of finding it, the skill in polishing it, the grace in setting it, which make it so priceless a gem.

How valuable is a grain of wheat in a farmer's stack! It is the taking it out and planting it, the reaping it, the threshing it, the grinding it, the packing it, the transporting it, the making it into bread fit for man's use, which lend it its value. The fruitful and benignant Earth, smiled on by favouring Heaven, cannot bestow on man such wealth as he can by his own hand force and wring from the most sterile soil and unaccommodating clime. It is not the natural growth of plants, not the gifts of the soil, however great they may be, which make a people wealthy. Nature nowhere does more for man than in India. All vegetable treasures of the forest and the field, all mineral treasures of the mine and of the sea are hers, and yet how poor are her people!—how poor the country itself! A single county of England is actually worth in money a whole Indian province. There is more real wealth and worth in Yorkshire than in the great presidency of Bombay.

The products of agriculture lie dead and cold and cumber the ground, until they are seized on by manufacture and commerce. The one manipulates and transforms them into the various fashions best adapted for use, adding a value by every touch, and the other bears them away, by land and sea, and distributes them over the earth.

Mr. President, there have been those who have suggested that there was a difference, if not an opposition of interests between the farmer and the merchant, and mechanic and manufacturer. That these various pursuits rather preyed on, than lived by each other, and that the success and prosperity of the farmer particularly, was incompatible with that of the mechanic or manufacturer, and that protection to home industry was a sacrifice of him to the others.

In a government like ours, sir, and with a people like ours, we need fear no external foe. We have now reached a point of national greatness that enables us, if need be, to meet on equal terms with the proudest and the strongest of the great powers of the earth. But, sir, we have always a danger, always a foe to guard against, most deadly and most insidious. It is unsound public opinion. This is worse than all the rage of foreign hostile nations,—more to be feared than famine or pestilence.

It has been the fortunate destiny of this association to meet and overcome a most dangerous fallacy, that might, perhaps, otherwise have grown into public opinion, that is, the fallacy that agriculture and its interests are injured by the protection of domestic industry.

There are doubtless great objects yet to be accomplished by this body, great ends yet to be reached; but had it done nothing else than this, it had earned an enviable fame, had perfected a great work, and entitled itself to the lasting gratitude of all who are truly anxious for the welfare of their country.

There are triumphs of many kinds—civil triumphs, forensic triumphs, political and party triumphs, and glorious military triumphs, but each of these is often purchased at such cost as mingles some regret with all the rejoicing; “*medio de fonte leporum surgit amari aliquid*,” but a great victory of truth over falsehood, of sound sense over error, is a triumph without alloy, a triumph in which all may join, as fortunate for those who have been overcome as for those who have prevailed. May such be the continued achievements of the American Institute!

